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New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Meeting on the global food and energy crisis

Agenda item 48 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Mr. Pramudwinai (Thailand): Thank you, Mr. President, not just for convening this timely meeting today, but for your stimulating statement this morning urging the world to jointly address this highly important and urgent global food and energy crisis. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his leadership in mobilizing the United Nations and other relevant organizations to respond to these challenges, resulting in the comprehensive framework for action.

Allow me to also mention my delegation's full support for the calls by Indonesia, Egypt and Chile, as reflected in their joint letters to the President-elect of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session, for the Assembly to include food and energy security and development as a central theme of the upcoming sixty-third session. Today, in the sixty-second session, you, Sir, are laying a foundation for further deliberations at the next session.

The comprehensive framework for action has provided a comprehensive picture of the what, why and how of the crisis. I could not agree with you more, Sir, and with all the other speakers this morning, that the global food and energy crisis calls for urgent and collective actions. Indeed, the challenges of this issue is staring us in the face. We all know its severity, gravity and devastating effects, and we know full well that the matter has progressed beyond the stage for reflecting on and lamenting its nature, causes and problems. The concern before us now is, rather, how to tackle it. Tackling it jointly, with political will and genuine resolve, is the only way to go, and concrete steps must be taken in that regard.

Thailand is the world's fifth largest food producer and a top rice-exporting country, it is in our interests — and our intention — to join the world in doing our best to help alleviate the food problem facing us all today. Thailand will increase its production capacity, or will at least maintain its level of production, and export 9 million tons of rice per year to the world market.

While Thailand has an innate natural capacity to grow both food and energy crops, the Thai Government has no policy of prioritizing the production of energy crops over food crops. Rather, biofuels have so far been produced from crops that are surplus to domestic food consumption, such as cassava and sugar cane. Although we are not a net energy importer, like some other less fortunate countries, we share the pain of those countries when seeing the impact of the rise of fuel costs on the livelihoods of their people, not to mention the destabilizing effect that these price hikes have had on world economic activities.

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But the relevant question is: How much have speculation, financial volatility and supply and demand factors contributed to this hike? How much speculation has spiralled into attempts at market manipulation? The world is governed by a free-market economy. We all believe in market forces. But if market forces are partially steered by manipulative efforts, it is incumbent upon the international community to rectify that, with the objective of stabilizing prices. Can prices be maintained at a comfortable level for all consumers, all producers and those in the energy business alike, for an extended period, say two or three years? That would be possible if and only if the political will is there and when we realize that the results of inaction would be too damaging for any country to bear or for the world economy to sustain. In tackling this global food and energy crisis, can we count on the United Nations to put its efforts into real and concrete actions?

Mr. Tarar (Pakistan): Allow me at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting to address the food and energy challenges before us. We also thank the Secretary-General for presenting the comprehensive framework for action. Pakistan associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The triple challenge of food, fuel and finance that we are facing today has serious economic and social ramifications, especially for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the aim of making poverty history. The current food crisis has affected millions of people in developing countries. The crisis is a result of the neglect of agriculture; bad policies on trade; biofuels; market speculation; natural disasters; and the impact of climate change. The international community's response has to be urgent, coherent and comprehensive. The current emergency phase should focus mainly on meeting the needs of stressed and vulnerable groups. Short-term actions should aim at increasing production. Over the longer term, we need to address the underlying policy and structural issues.

It is important that the framework for action have the ownership of the entire international community. For that to happen, there is a need for greater interaction and consultation between the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and Member States here at the United Nations and for a periodic review of the framework's implementation by the General Assembly. Since we have had very little time to analyse the proposed framework, we would like to give our views and input at the next possible opportunity.

The Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus to be held in Doha and, before that, the General Assembly's high-level meeting on the MDGs will provide opportunities to address these challenges at the highest level. In that regard, we support the proposal of Chile, Egypt and Indonesia that food security and development be the main theme of the general debate of the sixty-third session, without prejudice to other issues on the global agenda.

Similarly, we look forward to a comprehensive and equitable approach to dealing with the problem of energy prices. We do not support the assumption that the rise in energy prices is due to a supply-demand gap. The price hike in energy is attributable to a host of factors. First, the immediate problem lies in refining capacity, not inadequate supply. The extra supply that the developed countries keep demanding from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries can only come from sour crude. There is a lack of sufficient refining capacity even in the most industrialized economies. Refining is the bottleneck, not the supply of crude oil itself. Secondly, due to speculation, crude oil prices keep increasing, because the speculators are adding into the current prices the assumption that the world is going to run out of oil one day and that there are no additional reserves, thus discouraging further exploration. Thirdly, there is a doomsday security scenario for the oil-rich areas. Increasing rhetoric about imminent conflict and strikes in the Gulf, coupled with the problems in Nigeria and the Sudan, has been a major factor in pushing up the prices.

Some control mechanism and regulations are needed to moderate prices by curbing manipulative speculation. Speculation in fuel and food benefits only the speculators, hedge funds and traders who continuously test and push the markets to the limits. It is beneficial neither for the common man, nor for the economy.

There is an urgent need to provide balance-of-payment support to the developing countries, that are the most severely affected by the rising food and

energy prices. We urge the rich countries generously to support the developing countries in their balance-of-payment problems. The welcome initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the generous $500-million contribution by His Majesty King Abdullah should be followed up by other steps to moderate prices and meet the financial needs of the affected developing countries.

The current financial crisis in the industrialized economies has critically exposed the vulnerabilities of a liberalized financial system. It has also highlighted the challenge facing the policymakers and regulators in an increasingly globalized, ever-changing world. The financial crisis will induce a slowdown in world trade and exert downward pressure on domestic development in most emerging markets, with varying impact depending on the country. If the current turbulence develops into a full-blown systemic financial crisis, with a large contraction in credit distribution in the major industrial economies and a lengthy painful period for the financial sector worldwide, there would be hugely negative consequences and decoupling would probably disappear under pressure from protectionism and financial transmission mechanisms.

Therefore, it is also important to prevent a major depressive impact on the economies of the South and to alleviate the undue burden being placed on the emerging markets of Asia to maintain growth in the world economy. Even as the real-estate and stock-market bubbles deflate in the major industrial economies, it is important to ensure that their adjustment response does not consist of resorting to new protectionism against the developing countries.

At the same time, it is all the more important now to ensure the implementation of the commitments undertaken significantly to increase official development assistance. We are disappointed that, despite the commitments made earlier in Monterrey at the world leaders' summit and in Gleneagles, official development assistance declined in 2006 and 2007.

Lastly, the two requirements most imperative to meeting the food and energy challenges are money and technology. The United Nations must take the lead in generating both. If it does not, poverty and despondency will grow, with potentially destabilizing effects on a large number of countries.

The challenges are huge, as should be our collective will and response. We cannot afford to falter any further on the agreed development commitments and goals. Procrastination and inaction will be catastrophic. We need to act, and to act now.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the convening of today's meeting to discuss the continuing and rapid rise in world food prices and the world energy crisis.

May I begin by reminding the Assembly that Egypt, Indonesia and Chile have suggested to the President-elect of the Assembly, Miguel d'Escoto, that the general debate of the sixty-third session of the General Assembly should focus precisely on the food crisis and development, without prejudice to other key issues on the world agenda.

The food crisis affects the international community as a whole and directly harms the most vulnerable and the poorest. Its potential global consequences, if not tackled with resolve, could become a major tragedy — a silent tsunami, as it has been described.

An important first step towards tackling the food crisis was the creation of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, which advises the Secretary-General, and the recent holding of the High-Level Conference on World Food Security in Rome. In that regard, we wish to thank the members of the Task Force for the comprehensive framework for action, which provides guidelines for Governments, multilateral organizations and other stakeholders in dealing with the crisis. It is an important contribution, although we would have liked to have seen a clearer reference to the causal relationship, among others, between subsidies and trade-distorting practices in the developed countries and the current food crisis.

The apparent causes of the food crisis are related to the increased demand for food in countries with emerging economies, where growing sectors of the population are escaping poverty and consuming more; the adverse effects of climate change on agriculture; the soaring price of oil; the demand for alternative energy resources from certain farm crops; and the subsidies and other trade-distorting practices in international trade.

The global price of food commodities has risen by 83 per cent over the past 36 months, and it is estimated that 835 million people are affected by global food insecurity. The price of wheat has

increased by 130 per cent in the past year. Prices of dairy products have doubled since 2005. The World Bank has indicated that high food prices are a matter of daily struggle for 2 billion people, and that an additional 100 million people have been pushed into poverty in the past two years by the rise in the prices of foodstuffs.

In the case of oil, as is already known, the world has experienced a 96-per-cent increase over the past year, with the price per barrel having surpassed $145, almost double its price in June 2007. For every dollar rise in the price of oil, the operational costs of airlines, to cite one example, have increased by more than €1 billion.

The positive side of higher oil prices has been a certain rationalizing of consumption, stimulus for greater efficiency and investment in alternative energy sources. Investment in clean energy jumped from €21 billion in 2004 to almost €95.3 billion in 2007. It is no surprise that it was the shares of a solar energy company that showed the highest rise on the United States stock exchange last year, to the tune of 800 per cent.

The challenge for energy-dependent countries, such as Chile, which imports three quarters of its energy, is particularly acute. President Bachelet has decided to accelerate our efforts to diversify the energy matrix so as to minimize the adverse impacts of that vulnerability.

We should explore new ways to save energy and substantially increase the share of renewable sources in the total energy supply. We should recognize that Latin America is lagging behind other regions in improving energy efficiency, while we are working to coordinate energy-related initiatives within the framework of the recently established Union of South American Nations.

The progress in poverty reduction made by many developing countries is being wiped out by the inflation in food and energy prices, undermining their capacity to attain the Millennium Development Goals. As the dollar has shrunk in value, oil and commodities priced in dollars are going up, with serious inflationary effects in developing countries. In Chile, the food consumer price index rose almost 15 per cent towards the end of 2007, pushing up Chile's overall inflation rate. A similar trend is occurring in such countries as China, Mexico and Brazil, and in other countries of South Africa, as can be seen in a graph accompanying the written version of my statement.

The food crisis, as we have said before, could be a serious cause of social and political unrest. Therefore, first and foremost, immediate measures are needed to assist the most vulnerable countries and the populations most affected by high food prices. The World Bank estimates that poor countries will require about $6 billion a year in food aid since it is expected that prices are going to stabilize at high levels. Of those $6 billion, $3.5 billion will be needed for short-term safety net projects.

Secondly, like some previous speakers, we are concerned by speculative strategies that may be influencing the high level of food prices. The emerging famine is not a crisis in the global food supply. Markets are replete with foodstuffs, but the problem is that consumers in developing countries cannot buy them because of their high prices.

Thirdly, in the longer term a new boost must be given to agriculture, promoting greater investment in scientific and technological research, infrastructure and access to fertilizers, and ensuring the free flow of scientific and technological know-how to the developing countries.

Fourthly, we must optimize the planet's agricultural potential, and that can be done only by eliminating all the agricultural subsidies and other market-distorting mechanisms that are adversely affecting the developing world. We need clear and fair rules that will enable the developing world to compete on an equal footing and to achieve greater levels of prosperity. Chile resolutely supports the idea that the Doha Round should include a debate on the rise in food prices and its impact on the poorest countries and on the negotiations for the liberalization of world trade, as well as the need to find a solution to the problem.

Lastly, rising food costs will exacerbate world hunger. According to one estimate, the number of malnourished people will rise from 860 million in 2006 to 1.2 billion in 2017 unless we act more forcefully. We therefore attach importance to such measures as the Latin America and the Caribbean without Hunger Initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the initiative to fight hunger and poverty launched initially by Brazil, France and Chile, which are already bearing fruit through the

International Drug Purchase Facility, to which Chile has contributed considerable financial resources.

To sum up, we must act swiftly to address a food and energy crisis that will not disappear of its own accord. On the contrary, the two-fold crisis will worsen if we do not take timely action. Chile is prepared to support specific actions in the quest for a coordinated solution to a crisis that affects all of us without exception, but which especially harms the weakest and poorest, who deserve all our support.

Mrs. Tobing (Indonesia): Mr. President, allow me, first of all, to congratulate you on your initiative in convening this meeting. I should also like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for the briefing on the global food and energy crisis and the presentation on the High-Level Task Force's revised comprehensive framework for action.

I would also like to associate myself fully with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The global crisis we are facing today is arguably the worst food and energy situation the world has seen since the early 1970s. The crisis has already had dire socio-economic and political consequences for many countries and threatens global economic stability. Against that backdrop, we call on the international community to take concerted and sustained action to address the food crisis. It is therefore our conviction that the General Assembly should provide the international community with leadership and guidance and shepherd our global efforts at addressing the crisis.

We fully recognize that the primary responsibility for development falls within national boundaries. However, with the food crisis and slowing global economy, it has become virtually impossible for developing countries to achieve their development targets and commitments, including the Millennium Development Goals.

Although the situation looks difficult, we are confident that it is still manageable. Several international efforts have helped to address the crisis, such as the Secretary-General's initiative on the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, the High-Level Conference on Food Security of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the recent Group of Eight summit. They all have reached a common conclusion that the world needs to boost food production. The efforts undertaken could be likened to the Green Revolution that was so successful in the 1960s, but this time around, they need massive investment and an active global partnership.

Furthermore, a revitalization of the agricultural sector, including in developing countries, still provides new opportunities. With today's knowledge and technologies, agricultural revitalization can go a step further. We can both address poverty and create sustainable crop production while also doing environmentally friendly agricultural intensification.

To that end, the role of developed countries is important. They in particular need to increase the flow of investment, share their experience and transfer technology for food production in order to support developing countries' agricultural sectors. It is also important for developed countries to use their aid and trade policies to boost agriculture production in developing countries.

On the part of developing countries, the agricultural sector needs to be better mainstreamed into the national development agenda. The recent Declaration of the High-Level Conference on World Food Security: The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy, which took place in Rome, and High-Level Task Force's comprehensive framework for action provide an array of plans and policy options that can help revitalize agriculture sectors at the national level.

The role of the private sector needs to be emphasized in helping reverse the trend of declining investments and cooperation in agriculture. Governments, the private sector and the research community must actively interlink and engage. In that context, a framework for an active global partnership on food security that is ambitious, comprehensive and inclusive could be established.

We welcome the revised comprehensive framework for action introduced by the Secretary-General. We believe that the elaboration of the section on how to achieve the framework outcome is indeed important. Furthermore, the additional emphasis on partnerships at the country, regional and global levels is also important in ensuring the effective implementation of the framework.

However, we have observed that the framework remains silent on the costs of implementing plans or policies proposed on its menu. We understand that the

framework is not an investment programme. Nevertheless, an indication or projection of implementation costs would provide valuable insight.

The international community has yet to develop a global follow-up or a monitoring system to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the various suggested plans and policy options for addressing the crisis. We believe that it would be highly valuable to establish such a global follow-up or a monitoring system. Establishing targets and a time frame in which we can expect to see results should be part of the system.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It must be emphasized that it is important for the long-term focus to be on improving global food security. In that context, we feel the General Assembly can play a leading role. The Assembly should be able to monitor and evaluate the global progress and effectiveness of the various efforts to address the global food crisis and to improve global food security. It is for that reason that Indonesia, together with Chile and Egypt, has proposed the issue of food security and development as the theme for the sixty-third session of the General Assembly. That could perhaps open the way for the Assembly to take more concrete action on food security.

It is important for us also to highlight the fact that the global food crisis did not occur overnight; the upward trend in the prices of agricultural commodities began in 2006. In addition, there have long been analyses and predictions regarding an imminent global food security crisis. The fact that the international community did not take more serious notice of those signals highlights the urgency of establishing a global system to better monitor food security.

If we are to be better prepared, we believe it is important that the United Nations enhance its capacity to anticipate and avert the recurrence of such crises in the future. The United Nations, together with other relevant bodies, needs to develop a better system to monitor and report on the status of the global supply and demand for food and the status of global food prices — a system that can act as an early warning system for global food insecurity.

In addition, it may be useful to have a system in place that can quickly stabilize supply shortages of staple food commodities on a short-term basis. That could be particularly useful in times of disasters and other food security emergencies. We in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have existing mechanisms in place, such as the ASEAN Food Security Reserve Board; the East Asia Emergency Rice Reserve, comprising the ASEAN countries plus China, Japan and the Republic of Korea; and the ASEAN Food Security Information System. It could be useful to develop similar mechanisms in other regions or at the global level.

Mr. Christian (Ghana): I join previous speakers in thanking the President of the General Assembly for organizing this meeting. We also express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his statement and take this opportunity to reaffirm Ghana's deep appreciation for his leadership in fashioning an international response to the formidable challenges posed by climate change, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the unfolding food and energy crisis.

Ghana associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Ethiopia on behalf of the Group of African States.

Ghana fully shares the Secretary-General's sense of urgency regarding the need for prompt action to prevent a rollback of the modest progress recently recorded among many developing countries. The prospect of an estimated 100 million more people joining the ranks of the 854 million chronically undernourished worldwide is deeply troubling, to say the least. We hope that that fear will not materialize, and we fully endorse the call for immediate humanitarian relief for those facing hunger and malnutrition.

Ghana therefore welcomes the updated version of the comprehensive framework for action and commends the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis for its hard work and wisdom. We are particularly pleased to note that that document has shed further light on the range of tools and resources that could be harnessed at the national, regional and international levels to achieve lasting food and nutrition security.

The very composition of the High-Level Task Force is a reflection of the sophistication and high degree of political, financial and technological power

that currently reposes in the intergovernmental system. Better still, that immense power could be infinitely augmented if we were to draw on the knowledge, experience and energy of the civil society groups that have tirelessly and repeatedly sounded the alarm about the dangers inherent in the prevailing imbalances in the world system and the threats that they pose to the human family at large.

In saying that, my delegation is all too mindful of the fact that opinions vary, both in official and in non-official circles, as to the root causes of the current food and energy crisis and what the most appropriate responses should be in those circumstances. As the framework itself notes, soaring food prices are the cumulative effect of long-term trends, including changing supply and demand factors.

Nonetheless, we must be prepared to acknowledge those past policy failures and other persistent problems relating to agricultural trade, biofuels and food market volatilities that have systematically undermined the productivity of the agricultural sectors on which most developing countries, including Ghana, have traditionally relied for food and income.

At the same time, let me hasten to add that it is neither prudent nor safe to allow differences of opinion on essentially complex issues to weaken our resolve to act expeditiously to contain a crisis that could profoundly destabilize many if not all countries, with far-reaching consequences.

To my delegation, therefore, it has become clearer than ever before that food and nutrition security raises strategic questions that ought to redefine the global partnership necessary to address the triple challenge of climate change, the MDGs and the food and energy crisis.

One principle that should guide such a new partnership is that Governments must enjoy the policy space required to make decisions and adopt programmes that work best in their peculiar national circumstances, as demonstrated by Malawi, whose successes in the agricultural sector are indeed a source of pride and inspiration for Ghana.

In that connection, Ghana is pleased that the comprehensive framework for action has recognized the practical usefulness of offering what the report describes as "a menu of policies and actions" that will allow Governments, civil society, the rural poor and smallholder farmers to assume their rightful roles, with the support of the donor community and in accordance with national priorities. Furthermore, it is our fervent hope that the rich ideas contained in the framework will provide a useful backdrop for the discussions that will take place in the coming months at the various conferences that will precede the World Summit in Copenhagen next year.

Finally, Ghana looks forward to working with our counterparts in our subregional and regional institutions and within agreed frameworks, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the MDGs, to advance our shared objectives.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Permit me at the outset to associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. My delegation congratulates the President of the General Assembly on having convened this important debate on the food and energy crisis, which is a matter of priority for Ecuador.

We appreciate the comprehensive approach of the comprehensive framework for action presented to us today, since it addresses the problem in all its complexity and emphasizes the relationship among the food crisis, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and climate change. We also appreciate the fact that the framework is a flexible tool enabling each country to utilize it in accordance with its specific conditions and needs.

However, our delegation believes that the framework requires more detailed analysis, which my delegation has not been able to provide, having received it only a short time ago. However, we would, of course, be interested in doing so at a future meeting.

The food crisis that we are experiencing is the consequence of the unsound actions, policies and measures of a number of Governments, which have caused a global price escalation and food shortage. Among the causes of the crisis, we must mention the harmful policy of agricultural subsidies maintained by many developed countries, which cause serious distortions and compel developing countries that used to be food producers to dismantle their agricultural production in order to become importers. That policy of subsidies practised by the developed countries is echoed in their lack of political will to conclude the

negotiations on agricultural products in the Doha Round, which has meant that many of the foodstuffs produced in developing countries cannot reach international markets.

The food crisis has prompted several Latin American countries to sign the Managua declaration of the Presidential Summit on Sovereignty and Food Security: Food for life, in which we recognize the sovereign right of countries to food security and pledge to support State and private investment in sustainable food production. We acknowledge the need to implement policies and programmes in a coordinated fashion through South-South cooperation mechanisms with a view to stepping up food production on the basis of sustainability and respect for the environment.

Ecuador is one of the 12 most diverse countries of the planet. Its diversity of biological resources, crops and climates directly benefits every aspect of our food production. That is why my Government has developed a comprehensive strategy to address the crisis and is in the process of implementing an agricultural and livestock sector reinvigoration plan aimed at bolstering the production of foodstuffs, promoting development in rural agricultural communities, stimulating public and private productive investment, boosting competitiveness and protecting natural resources and biodiversity. In implementing the plan, Ecuador hopes to create its own food reserve.

It is clear that we cannot leave the right to food to the mercy of the market. Upholding that right must be the responsibility of the international community and the result of the political will of the States and organizations of our system to progress towards development paradigms predicated on the well-being of human beings and not on growth as an end in itself. We believe that the problem of the world food crisis is one that can be resolved not through donations of food to developing countries, but through the adoption of State policies that commit countries to cooperating with each other, fostering investment to improve agricultural production, establishing a consensus that will allow for fair market access to foodstuffs and recognizing the right of States to their food sovereignty.

We could undertake endless analyses of magic formulas for a solution based on immediate humanitarian assistance, increased agricultural investments or the necessary macroeconomic adjustments, and it is true that we must act on all levels and in an urgent fashion. However, the crisis we are experiencing today will recur or will be perpetuated if we do not rethink current production and consumption paradigms. It is imperative that we work together for the sake of a new development ethic.

Mr. Sergeyev (Ukraine): My delegation extends our gratitude to General Assembly President Kerim for convening this important meeting. I would like to indicate that Ukraine aligns itself with the statement made earlier by the delegation of France on behalf of the European Union. I would therefore like to touch upon some issues that are of specific interest to my country and relevant to the theme of today's deliberations.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his address to the Assembly today and for submitting to Member States the revised version of the comprehensive framework for action.

The need for global development cooperation for food safety is extremely acute and urgent in the context of achieving the goals of the Millennium Declaration. We all agree that the human right to food is the greatest fundamental value and the basis of international relations in the twenty-first century.

Ukraine supports the measures taken by the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system under the leadership of the Secretary-General, particularly the establishment of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

We consider today's meeting to be an important step in the process of the further elaboration of a coordinated and comprehensive plan of action directed towards overcoming the crisis. Undoubtedly, it will become the most important stage in the decision-making process; it will add new elements to those discussed during the recent session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council on the global food crisis. That process will be continued during the Economic and Social Council's high-level event on the Millennium Development Goals and the General Assembly's high-level meeting on the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, both to be held in September, as well as at the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus to be held later this year.

We hope that the problem of the food crisis and development will be the focus of the upcoming sixty-third session of the General Assembly. At this point, we would like to express support for the initiative of Egypt, Chile and Indonesia outlined in their letter addressed to the President-elect of the General Assembly.

Ukraine will strongly support the United Nations initiatives focused on fighting global poverty and famine and on increasing food production capacities. Ukraine, which lost millions of people as a result of the man-made famine of 1932 and 1933 — the Holodomor — understands the necessity of timely aid and food distribution.

As one of the biggest producers of grain, Ukraine has extensive experience in providing food assistance to countries in need. We recently sent aid to Myanmar, Tajikistan and certain African States. On a bilateral level, those humanitarian supplies are being delivered effectively and in a timely manner because of a lack of bureaucracy.

We are willing to act as donors in the context of the ambitious mechanism proposed by the Task Force. We expect that mechanism to be effective, transparent, less expensive and less bureaucratic. We hope that the comprehensive framework for action will create a system to deal with the urgent situation and aimed at creating medium- and long-term mechanisms to help countries in permanent crisis to make their economies capable of coping with food challenges.

The global food situation calls for a strong commitment from Governments and all other stakeholders. We stress the importance of the effective and efficient use of the resources of the United Nations system and other relevant international organizations. We are convinced that we should work at all levels within the United Nations framework to develop mechanisms for coordinated action aimed at reducing hunger and poverty in the world.

I am confident that a further deepening of our cooperation on food will be extremely helpful to our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Soler Torrijos (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): First and foremost, I wish to congratulate the President of the General Assembly on taking this initiative. The two issues before us are closely related to each other and to the ominous issue of climate change. The food and climate change issues are largely the consequence of the energy issue.

My delegation welcomes the initiatives that have been undertaken to address the situation within the United Nations and other forums. I take the floor to address the complexity of the current situation.

As we all know, oil prices continue to rise because of four concomitant factors. First, world demand continues to rise, together with the shortage of new oil fields and of capacity to refine heavy crude oil, which will continue to restrict supply. Secondly, there are conflicts in major oil extraction areas. Thirdly, there are important speculative components to the increase in the price of crude and refined products, which exacerbates the situation. Fourthly, the dollar is weak.

The disproportionate increase in demand is outstripping that which can be attributed to an increase in world population and industrialization. Indeed, much of the increase stems from the spendthrift consumption patterns of the most industrialized countries. Likewise, conflicts in some of the main oil reserve areas compound the speculative component, which enriches a few while devastating the bulk of humanity.

Thus, on the one hand, this consumption pattern and the hegemonistic use of fossil fuels generate environmental pollution and climate instability to the detriment of agriculture. On the other hand, the price of hydrocarbons is increasing the cost of agricultural products, causing an increase in both the prices of inputs, such as fertilizers and pesticides, and the costs of processing and transportation of such products.

Developing countries need affordable, renewable and clean energy sources that are not likely to become more expensive or to jeopardize the environment. In turn, there is an urgent need to increase the production and supply of healthy and affordable foodstuffs to a growing population whose food security must be safeguarded. The need for greater food production arises not just from poverty, but also from progress; no sooner are more jobs and decent incomes available than the population naturally demands better food, as is its legitimate right.

For its part, the exorbitant cost of hydrocarbons stimulates demand for and production of agricultural biofuels. One sector of agriculture has always provided

raw materials to industry, but that is now being supplemented by the additional use of agricultural lands. That option is welcome so long as it makes it possible to exploit impoverished or fallow soils without reducing the production of food or affecting forest reserves, since it helps to reduce our dependence on oil and contributes to the development of rural areas.

All of the foregoing is ample reason for the demand that those problems be discussed in a timely and serious manner in the United Nations and other competent international bodies, because this is a matter that unjustly impairs national economies and the lives of our peoples, especially the economies and populations of developing countries that, like our own, do not produce hydrocarbons — in other words, those that constitute the bulk of humankind.

The problem is so grave that its discussion can be neither deferred nor prolonged without practical outcome. In the strictest sense of the term, the prices of oil and its derivatives, as well as their affect on the costs and supply of foodstuffs, already constitute a threat to international peace and security. Accordingly, the United Nations must continue to tackle that issue as a matter of urgent priority.

Mr. Mbuende (Namibia): My delegation wishes to express its gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for organizing this meeting to exchange views on the current global food and energy crisis that is threatening to push many households back into poverty. The meeting is timely, coming as it does on the heels of the Rome summit on 3 June 2008 and the establishment by the Secretary-General of a Task Force to deliberate on the crisis.

We thank the Secretary-General and his team for the comprehensive framework for action. We associate ourselves with the statements made by the representatives of Antigua and Barbuda and Ethiopia, who spoke on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Group of African States, respectively.

The current global food and energy crisis comes at a time when we are halfway to the target for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This is a time when the international community is supposed to intensify its efforts to support developing countries in achieving the MDGs. However, the current skyrocketing prices of basic foodstuffs have left many households unable to place food on the table. The situation, which is also being worsened by high oil prices and harsh weather conditions as the result of climate change, threatens to reverse our gains vis-à-vis the achievement of the first MDG. The crisis could even develop into a threat to international peace and stability; as the saying goes, a hungry man is an angry man.

Namibia, as a net importer of both food and oil, has been hit hard by the crisis. The prices of both food and petrol have more than doubled in the past six months. On the other hand, local food production has been affected by extreme weather conditions. For instance, for the 2008-2009 marketing season, our domestic food requirement is estimated to be 309,000 tons, while our output is forecast to be only 125,000 tons, or less than 50 per cent of our requirements, which translates into a deficit of about 184,000 tons. We are therefore alarmed by the news that a number of food-producing countries around the world have already put in place mechanisms to restrict food exports, while some of their citizens are hoarding food in order to artificially influence the market. In that regard, while the General Assembly should call on Governments to scale up their investment in agriculture and increase productivity, it should also discourage the practice of hoarding food.

The Assembly should also call on international financial institutions to increase their lending for agriculture. However, we are of the view that increasing productivity constitutes an uphill battle because of high oil prices. The prices of all agricultural inputs, such as fertilizers, machinery and transport, have been increasing substantially, with a negative effect on the prices of products.

While we welcome all emergency measures to save the lives of those who are being directly threatened by the crisis, we also advocate the search for and adoption of long-term solutions. In that regard, our Government has taken a number of measures to increase agricultural productivity, taking into account our country's unique situation. Those measures include the Green Scheme programme, which promotes the development of irrigated agronomic production aimed at increasing the contribution of agriculture to the country's gross national product and at achieving a high degree of social development, uplifting those communities located within the suitable irrigation areas. Our agricultural production, marketing and processing initiative, through which the Government

strives to increase the local production, marketing and processing of fruits, vegetables, livestock fodder and other agricultural products, is aimed at lessening our dependence on imports and promoting added value. Our Government has also invested in the construction of strategic storage facilities to minimize shortages in the future.

Other measures to boost agricultural production are the subsidization of agricultural inputs, such as ploughing services and the provision of fertilizers and quality seeds for small-scale farmers. Agricultural extension services have also been decentralized in order to make them easily accessible to farmers. I must, however, hasten to state that increasing food and oil prices are also attributable to speculation on the commodities markets. If nothing is done to address the situation, we will soon be faced with a situation similar to that of the sub-prime mortgage crisis.

The current food crisis is not primarily an agricultural issue. It is the product of many determinants, the bulk of which are man-made. Indeed, it is symptomatic of the instability of the global economy. The global economic and financial institutions are not in a position to perform the task for which they were created. We need to reform those institutions, lest we be subjected to crisis after crisis.

Mr. Benmellouk (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to thank the President for convening this meeting on food security, an issue that challenges us to act swiftly to save millions of people from hunger and malnutrition. I should also like to welcome the Secretary-General's initiative to report to us regularly on the measures taken by the United Nations to address the food crisis. I thank him for his detailed briefing on the comprehensive framework for action prepared by the High-Level Task Force. The report presented today shows the scope of the crisis and the importance of the coordination and collaboration efforts undertaken by members of the United Nations family.

Today, the world must face a threefold challenge: the escalations in the prices of food staples and energy products and the effects of climate change being felt throughout the world, sparing neither developed nor developing countries. However, it is the South that will be most affected. Indeed, the conjunction of those threats could bring to naught the efforts and progress made in combating hunger and poverty.

The report of the High-Level Task Force indicates that more than 850 million of the world's inhabitants suffer from hunger. The recent staggering rise in the prices of food products threatens to push another 100 million into the chasm of hunger and poverty. Thus, the objective of achieving the Millennium Development Goals before 2015 will be even more difficult to attain. The report also indicates that the crisis will worsen over the next six months. Hence, it is urgent to act in a coordinated and united manner.

It is essential to take urgent measures to attack the underlying causes of the current situation, which range from speculation on international markets to the effects of the agricultural subsidies provided by developed countries, and include the ineffectiveness of national policies, the decline in official development assistance for the agricultural sector, the rise in energy prices and, above all, global warming and its effects on agricultural production.

The current situation offers an opportunity for the international community to rethink the policies that have been in place and to strengthen links of cooperation in order to act collectively through short- and medium-term measures to deal with the crises.

The challenge posed by the food crisis requires a massive investment in agriculture and water conservation. Africa, which has significant potential, must be assisted and supported financially, technically and scientifically so that it can carry out its green revolution and feed its population.

However, agricultural policies in Africa cannot succeed without the significant reduction and eventual elimination of the agricultural subsidies provided by the developed countries. The members of the World Trade Organization should strive to conclude the Doha Round of negotiations in order to eliminate obstacles to international trade.

The United Nations system and the international financial institutions should coordinate their activities to aid the most vulnerable populations and should adapt their support to the needs of each region and country. The High-Level Task Force established by the Secretary-General should play a critical role in that regard.

It is also crucial to reverse the downward trend in official development assistance, particularly that to the agricultural sector, which, unfortunately, has continued

to decline. In that regard, we welcome the measures taken at the Group of Eight summit and the initiative of the European Union, as well as the funds announced by other States.

Finally, responding to the triple threat represented by the escalations in food and energy products and the effects of climate change requires international solidarity to meet the immediate needs of the most vulnerable, as well as the determination and political will to find lasting solutions to those crises.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay associates itself with the statement made by the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We welcome the initiative to organize this meeting and to invite the Secretary-General to brief the General Assembly on the revised comprehensive framework for action developed by the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

In addition, given the gravity and urgency of the problems we face, our country stresses the importance of keeping Member States informed about and involved in this process. Uruguay recognizes the valuable report introduced by the Secretary-General, the document submitted and the reports previously presented on the food crisis, as well as the initiatives adopted within the framework of the United Nations.

The comprehensive framework for action contains important statements and policy guidelines for overcoming the current crisis and is an important contribution to the search for solutions to the serious problems related to the food and energy crisis and the problems linked to climate change. Uruguay values that contribution. While we point to the need for a more detailed reading of the document, we wish to highlight a number of elements that we consider to be essential in the search for lasting solutions to the current situation.

Our country belongs to a region that is a major producer of food of great variety and that also has vast reserves of both non-renewable and renewable energy resources. That allows Latin America to contribute to the search for solutions to resolve the grave crisis affecting us.

However, if we are to find a sustainable and lasting solution, we must address the structural factors that have created the crisis. Undoubtedly, correcting the distortions caused by the multilateral trade system, in particular agricultural trade, will be decisive in ensuring the availability of abundant food to meet the needs of the entire world population.

In that connection, the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade represented an important step forward because agricultural trade was included for the first time in the multilateral trade agreements. However, we are still far from having achieved just, equitable and efficient agricultural trade.

For decades, international trade was characterized by relatively low food prices. It was theorized that some countries were producing food at increasingly lower prices, while others were making increasingly expensive industrial and technological products. As a result of many factors, the situation has changed; the rise in food prices has accelerated and, regrettably, caused a severe food crisis in many countries and strong inflationary pressures in others.

Uruguay believes that, while urgent measures must be taken to address the grave crisis before us, it is equally essential that there be a successful conclusion to the Doha Round, in particular its agricultural track, in order to guarantee global food security. In that connection, only a reduction in tariffs, the elimination of export subsidies and non-tariff restrictions, and a significant reduction in the internal assistance measures of developed countries, with their distorting effects on production and trade, will result in a more just, equitable and efficient world agricultural market. In that way, efficient producer countries will have the necessary guarantees for investments to ensure a considerable increase in world production and exportable supply.

Uruguay calls upon all countries, especially developed countries, to step up their efforts to reach an agreement that will make agricultural trade fairer, freer and more efficient. That means open markets and not protectionist markets, which would indeed bring about an increase in world production, a fall in prices and greater access to food for the world's population.

In addition, Uruguay believes it is necessary to stress the need for cooperation by the developed world to achieve a new generation of technology to intensify agricultural production that is economically and socially sustainable and resilient to climate change. We also stress the need for research to stem the ongoing loss of fresh water and soil resources for food

production in the future. In that respect, it is worth noting that access to and the transfer of technology are indispensable to increase world food production.

In conclusion, we would refer to the production of bio-energy and biofuels, that offers development opportunities to rural populations, who could find new sources of income in that area. However, we are aware of the risks involved for food security. That is why we believe that research and technical assistance are essential, in order to make the best of the opportunities for that type of agricultural production without compromising food security and the environment. Applying appropriate policies in producer countries while taking into account their specific characteristics will also allow us to reduce the risks associated with biofuel crops.

The severity and urgency of the crisis do not allow us any time to hesitate, and it is the responsibility of the international community to find speedy solutions that can mitigate its effects. If we do not also address structural problems, however, there will be no lasting solutions. In that regard, the liberalization of agricultural trade, access to and transfer of technology and research are absolutely necessary to increase world food production and ensure that food reaches those who need it most.

Mr. Al-Hadhrami (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the Assembly for convening this meeting to take up a very important question. I would also like to express the support of my delegation for the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, in which he shed light on the world food and energy crisis.

The unprecedented rise in the price of fuel, the recourse to biofuels, the decrease of investment in agriculture, accelerated demand for food, the depletion of the world's food reserves and concerns regarding climate change today are among the most important factors affecting the global food security crisis, which in turn will compromise the progress achieved in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) over the past few years. As indicated in the report of the World Bank, the food crisis will undermine the living conditions of millions of people around the world.

My country welcomes the establishment of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, led by the Secretary-General and consisting of the heads of the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and relevant departments of the Secretariat, aimed at promoting a unified response to the challenge of rising world food prices, including the facilitation of a priority plan of action. My delegation has also studied the Declaration of the High-Level Conference on World Food Security, entitled "The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy", issued on 5 June 2008 in Rome. My country was represented there by a high-level delegation led by our Prime Minister, Mr. Ali Mohammed Mujawar. The Conference enjoyed the participation of the ministers and representatives of 180 countries. The participants renewed their commitments to the objectives of the World Food Summit and the MDGs in order to take short-, medium- and long-term measures to limit the suffering from the present crisis and to stimulate the production of food and increased investment in agriculture.

The Republic of Yemen, in cooperation with donor countries and organizations, has embarked on administrative, financial and economic reforms and the preparation of a poverty reduction strategy, with the wide participation of the provinces, civil society organizations and the private sector. The strategy was endorsed by the Government on 4 June 2002. In that context, we would like international and regional organizations and other donor States to support the strategy in order to further the implementation of the MDGs. My Government has also decided to merge the five-year development plan and poverty reduction strategy into one document and link it to the implementation of the MDGs, taking 2005 as the starting point for the merger. It will also consolidate efforts made during the preparatory phase for the third five-year plan for development and poverty reduction for the period 2006 to 2010.

In conclusion, my delegation extends its sincere thanks and appreciation to all of those partners who contribute to development in Yemen. We renew our call to participate in resolving the grave world food crisis, which is a universal responsibility, to overcome key impediments to access to food and to contribute to the optimum sustainable exploitation of world resources, which is in our interests and in those of posterity.

Mr. Sen (India): I thank General Assembly President Kerim for convening this plenary meeting on

a topic that continues to present unprecedented challenges to all, particularly developing countries.

At the outset, allow me to emphasize the appropriateness of dealing with the food and energy crises together in an integrated manner. The sharp escalation in global oil prices has played a significant role in increasing input costs and in promoting biofuels, and both the energy and food crises have contributed significantly to inflation. I may add that it would have been even more useful today also to consider the third crisis — the global financial crisis, which is posing its interrelated challenges to our development efforts. Any meaningful response must address all three of those issues.

I thank the Secretary-General for providing the revised version of the comprehensive framework for action, produced by his High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, and for his briefing here this morning. We are in the process of studying that voluminous document in detail, as it was made available only a couple of days ago. At this stage, therefore, I will only make a few preliminary comments on the document.

The comprehensive framework for action represents the consensus view of the United Nations system on how to respond to the global food crisis. Some actions suggested in the framework for action are important and need to be implemented. However, the framework includes minimal, if any, contribution by Member States, which bear the primary burden in addressing the crisis and which, as acknowledged in the framework document itself, are at the centre of the response. In short, they are asked to implement something that they did not formulate, thereby making the efforts of the poor rather similar to the charge of the Light Brigade: theirs was not to question why; theirs was but to do or die. Of course, in this case we can question — and we shall.

Let me reiterate that the content of the framework would have been enriched and made easier to implement if the ideas and suggestions of Member States had been taken on board. I note that the framework proposes regular consultations with, inter alia, Member States. I am also encouraged that it does not seek to prescribe specific policies and activities, but rather provides a range of options from which choices can be made. Nevertheless, the overall thrust of the document appears to list options that Member States and others should implement without being part of the process of their elaboration.

The comprehensive framework for action also presents the food crisis as a threat and an opportunity. While every crisis can be considered an opportunity to build anew, and while enhanced food prices may result in improved returns for farmers, it would be unfortunate to present the desperation of millions of vulnerable people in their struggle to feed themselves as an opportunity.

Even on the substance of the recommendations, some key lacunae must be pointed out. It is clear that the agricultural productive capacity of developing countries has been systematically undermined over time through astronomical agricultural subsidies in developed countries, combined with pressure on developing countries to lower their tariffs and the harmful prescriptive advice from the Bretton Woods institutions to indiscriminately shift away from food crops for the domestic population to cash crops for export, which has been devastating for food security. Unfortunately, the comprehensive framework for action continues to make that recommendation in the context of high food prices. Logically, that is topsy-turvy, because it means that the countries concerned are to eliminate food insecurity through the very measures that have, at least partially, contributed to that insecurity.

It is good that the right to food has been recognized in the comprehensive framework for action; we would have hoped for better recommendations to ensure its realization. We would also have hoped that high food prices would have given the necessary impetus to developed countries for eliminating agricultural subsidies. In 2005, the agricultural subsidies of the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development amounted to $385.2 billion, while in the World Trade Organization those very countries induced developing countries to eliminate duties and barriers and expose their agriculture to this flood of subsidies. The developing countries' argument of food security was downplayed then. The very same argument is being used by the developed countries now. Earlier, low food prices justified the subsidies of the rich. Today, high food prices are used to justify them. Heads I win; tails you lose: that is how one squares the circle.

The issue of biofuels has also been addressed incorrectly or has been hidden in the rather coy generalities of "recent supply and demand dynamics". The key difference between food-grain-based biofuels and non-food-grain-based ones has been glossed over. Even if we decided to convert all the world's grain into biofuel, fossil fuels would still be required and we would not be left with anything to eat. In such a scenario, the diversion to biofuel production of land on which cereal for human consumption is grown is self-defeating. This morning, the President of the General Assembly said that increasing demand from emerging economies was one of the causes of supply-demand tension. The comprehensive framework for action does not mention this. Nor does the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

In fact, Mr. Kerim cited the International Monetary Fund several times, but he did not quote the recent World Bank report by the Bank's senior economist Don Mitchell, who has done a detailed month-by-month analysis of food price inflation, and has concluded that "Rapid income growth in developing countries has not led to large increases in global grain consumption and was not a major factor responsible for the large price increases". He has even discounted successive droughts in Australia. He concludes that "without the increase in biofuels, global wheat and maize stocks would not have declined appreciably and price increases due to other factors would have been moderate" and that higher energy and fertilizer prices accounted for an increase of 15 per cent, while biofuels have been responsible for a 75 per cent increase between 2002 and February 2008.

My attention was drawn to that report by the representative of the Caribbean Community, and I thank him for that. The report finds that biofuels production has distorted food markets by diverting grain away from food to fuel — a third of United States corn and half of European Union vegetable oils; taking away land for biofuel production; and sparking financial speculation in food grains. The comprehensive framework for action here inverts the facts when it calls speculation a consequence of food export restrictions, when these restrictions are clearly a consequence of the inflation fuelled partly by speculation. Incidentally, the report finds that Brazilian biofuels, derived from sugar cane, have not had such an impact.

Also missing from the framework is any meaningful reference to technology. Agricultural research and development and the transfer of new technology to farmers are crucial to enhance global food production as well as to address possible climate change impact on agriculture. In that regard, addressing the trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS) is essential to avoid monopolistic pricing of agricultural inputs, and institutions such as the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research must be supported. At the time of the Green Revolution, intellectual property rights for seeds were in the public domain. Today, thanks to the TRIPS Agreement, they are in the private domain.

Incidentally, the framework also talks of addressing climate change, the Millennium Development Goals and the food crisis holistically. Yet there is no recognition that biofuels represent an implicit carbon tax that actually falls disproportionately on the poor. The developed world's emissions amount to its having enjoyed an environmental subsidy for the past 200 years, continued through biofuel and agricultural subsidies. The intellectual property rights regime is actually an engine for transferring income from the developing to the developed world.

The comprehensive framework for action appears to treat short-term response measures by various countries from a unidimensional perspective. Yet such measures have ensured food security for millions and there has been commodity price stabilization, as acknowledged in the framework. Logically, the matter is straightforward. The framework's analysis of causes is not optimal in terms of their relative importance and balance. Therefore, its recommendations cannot be optimal in terms of relative priorities.

However, I would like to support some specific recommendations in the comprehensive framework for action, on nutrition intervention, school feeding programmes, enhanced safety nets, boosts to smallholder farmer production, investment in rural and agricultural infrastructure as well as reduction in post-harvest crop losses. These are among the measures that India has been advocating and implementing itself.

Despite its shortcomings, to which I have referred, the comprehensive framework for action at least represents an effort to address a pressing global

issue. However, no such global effort is visible when it comes to addressing the energy crisis. Over the past two years, oil demand has increased by 1 per cent annually, but prices in dollar terms have increased by 90 per cent. That actually amounts to a levy imposed by companies outside our tax jurisdiction — something we cannot tax away. Those high prices will eventually mean import compression that will have a negative impact on gross domestic product. It is time to take concerted global action now to address this crisis if we are to ensure that limited development gains are not lost.

Let me conclude on a positive note. India has been feeding 17 per cent of the world's population on less than 5 per cent of the world's water and 3 per cent of its arable land. Over a period of time, we have taken several measures to further increase agricultural output and food security. The latest estimates indicate that India will have a record harvest for the agricultural year 2007-08, thereby continuing the self-sufficiency in food grains that we have enjoyed since the late 1960s thanks to the Green Revolution. That experience gives us confidence that current global challenges can be met. But that requires genuine cooperation and concerted action at the global level.

Mrs. Juul (Norway): The rising prices of food and energy constitute a growing problem, in particular for the most vulnerable. We believe that, in the long term, high food prices could be a source of income in developing countries and that high energy prices could be a catalyst for innovation and for greater emphasis on the use of alternative, clean energy. But as we have seen over the past few months, an increased risk of hunger also means an increased risk of violence, crime and social unrest.

Combined with the challenges arising from climate change, the global food security situation calls for a strong commitment from all stakeholders to work together to achieve the objectives of the World Food Summit. Climate change is perhaps the greatest threat to food security. If we fail to place combating climate change at the very top of our food security agenda, we will be seriously neglecting our responsibility. Our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will help us in the long term, but not immediately. In the meantime, adaptation to climate change is paramount.

We must also balance short- and long-term measures. In our eagerness to act quickly, we must make sure that actions taken now do not have negative consequences in the long term. For example, when we distribute fertilizer and seeds as part of our response, no concessions can be made to proper analysis. Each intervention must be put in a larger context. For instance, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has drawn up excellent guidelines for seed aid. We must make sure they are used.

Norway welcomes the timely leadership shown by Kofi Annan in launching the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa. Increased productivity is clearly required to meet the needs of a growing global population, particularly in Africa, which has not enjoyed the increase in productivity seen in other parts of the world. In that regard, the private sector has to play a central role. Norway firmly believes in encouraging and facilitating public-private partnerships, but increased productivity is of little value to the African farmer if the products cannot reach a functional market.

Part of the answer to the crisis is to be found in the traditional development toolbox: infrastructure, improved governance and conducive economic policies. In our efforts to increase production, we must not back down on our principles of environmental sustainability. Those efforts must not lead to the loss of genetic resources for food and agriculture, including minor crops important for food security, nor must they cause the pollution or depletion of scarce water resources. Land tenure and property rights are another critical issue.

Let me also, through you, Sir, thank the Secretary-General for his leadership on the initiatives to develop concrete response measures to the food crisis. In that regard, we welcome the final proposal for a comprehensive framework for action that has been developed by the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. Norway is committed to playing an active role in the follow-up to the framework, and we therefore look forward to analysing the document and the recommendations it contains.

Mr. Muller (Marshall Islands): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Kingdom of Tonga on behalf of the Pacific small island developing States.

My delegation addresses this body on a matter of grave and immediate importance. While we deeply appreciate the shared global challenges of the energy

and food crisis, the Republic of the Marshall Islands is truly at the forefront of that global emergency.

The Republic of the Marshall Islands now lacks basic energy security. Unless urgent international action is taken, the Marshall Islands will exhaust its present fuel supplies in September. That is a dire situation, in which we may be left without electricity for the foreseeable future.

On 3 July, His Excellency Litokwa Tomeing, the President of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, issued a proclamation declaring a state of emergency due to rising fuel and food costs. That declaration was accompanied by executive orders immediately to implement nationwide energy conservation measures, as well as action plans for every Government ministry and agency. We are taking direct measures, but are also seeking to ensure immediate energy security, as well as medium- and long-term conservation and alternative energy strategies that reduce reliance on imported fossil fuel. As a small island developing State, we are well aware of our limited capacity to meet those challenges successfully without the immediate assistance of Member States and multilateral partners. Our concentrated attention to the crisis also impairs our ability to devote our limited resources to addressing the threat of the impact of climate change on our low-lying nation.

Even though our energy consumption charges have increased almost fourfold in the past year, and even with substantial tariff increases, our utility companies are now struggling desperately to fulfil their basic financial obligations to fuel suppliers. Raising consumer prices even higher only serves further to deprive our population of essential lifeline services. The gap between revenue and energy costs now poses a tremendous economic threat to our continued development. Global energy price shocks have also placed basic food staples nearly out of reach for much of our population and have had a crippling effect on the transport of basic necessities, including medical care, to our rural outer islands. We are now fast-tracking domestic agricultural projects to reduce our heavy dependence on imported food.

We are seeking the assistance of all Member States, including bilateral development partners, as well as the cooperation of the Secretary-General, the United Nations system and its specialized agencies, to avert a looming national crisis of unimaginable magnitude. We are also asking those same partners to work with us on a fast-track planning initiative to identify, evaluate and implement cost-appropriate, sustainable energy strategies. In that regard, we refer to our note recently circulated to the Office of the Secretary-General, as well as the outreach efforts of our embassies around the world.

We are pleased to report that we have recently requested the assistance of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and UN-Energy as potential partners in our attempt to meet this critical challenge. We are identifying means to expedite our proposed membership in UNIDO. We embrace our recent conversations with key bilateral development partners, but also note that we are still facing critical immediate and long-term challenges.

The overwhelming flood of statements in this plenary meeting makes it clear that our experience is by no means isolated, even if we are on the front line of the crisis. The Marshall Islands wishes to add our voice to this urgent and complex global dialogue, but we will be able to continue to do so only with the immediate partnership of the global community.

Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea): Let me first commend President Kerim on his excellent leadership in convening in a timely manner this meeting on the global food and energy crises, which are the most pressing challenges we face today. My thanks also go to the Secretary-General for his informative and succinct introductory remarks.

As the Secretary-General properly warned, the world is now faced with the triple challenge of addressing climate change, realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and responding to the food and energy crises. If unchecked, high and volatile food and energy prices will continue to pose a serious threat to global economic stability and growth. Furthermore, they are likely to reverse the achievements made over decades in the eradication of poverty and hunger, one of the prime objectives of the MDGs. It is feared that, in addition to some 854 million people currently suffering from hunger, the food crisis may push yet another 100 million people into extreme poverty and hunger.

As many representatives have pointed out, what is needed the most now is an urgent and well-coordinated collective response from the international community. In that regard, my delegation appreciates

the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General in tackling the food crisis, including through the establishment of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and the facilitation of the High-Level Conference on World Food Security in Rome last month. The Republic of Korea welcomes and supports the comprehensive framework for action and the Rome Declaration produced by the High-Level Task Force and the High-Level Conference, respectively. It is our belief that the two documents will serve as a valuable guideline as we seek to overcome the ongoing food crisis and to ensure sustainable global food security.

My delegation is of the view that the revised framework provides a range of options that we can choose from to deal with immediate needs, strengthen resilience and contribute to longer term food security. In order to achieve sustainable food security, mid- and long-term measures should be implemented in tandem with short-term and immediate measures.

To better implement the framework, it is imperative that the stakeholders build a consensus on a set of still-contentious issues such as biofuels, export restrictions, financial system reform including control of speculative investment, genetically modified organisms, and the local procurement of food assistance.

Here, I would like to share my thoughts on a couple of those issues. As for the biofuels issue, we believe that further research should be conducted in order to ensure that production of biofuels does not undermine food security. Export restrictions by food suppliers should be removed because they not only distort the world food market, but also decrease domestic productivity due to the relatively low domestic prices such restrictions engender.

My delegation believes that the global food crisis, if handled properly, could be transformed into an opportunity to revitalize agriculture and strengthen agricultural infrastructures. To that end, as the Secretary-General pointed out in his address at the Group of Eight summit in Hokkaido Toyako last week, we need a global partnership for food in which all stakeholders take part under the facilitation and coordination of the United Nations.

In addition, rural development is a prerequisite to achieving sustainable economic growth. In the course of our national development drive in the 1970s, rural development was an essential element. First and foremost, we focused on strengthening rural infrastructure, new technologies were introduced to increase agricultural production and investment in human resource development was given priority. The Republic of Korea is ready to share with any country its experience and knowledge gained in the process of its economic development over the past 40 years.

In conclusion, we firmly agree that only urgent and comprehensive action can offer potential solutions to the current crises. Our future will depend on how resolutely we endeavour to translate our commitments into concrete actions. In that regard, my delegation wishes to assure President Kerim of its full cooperation and support in addressing the current global crises.

Ms. Blum (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his presentation, as well as for the distribution of the comprehensive framework for action of the High-Level Task Force. We value this meeting as an opportunity to learn and exchange views on developments on the issues before us.

On previous occasions, Colombia has expressed its expectations with regard to the different areas of work of the Task Force. At this meeting, our concerns focus on the linkages between the global food situation and the challenges faced by the international community with respect to energy security.

First, we stress the complex and multidimensional nature of the food supply issue, which requires comprehensive responses including short-, medium- and long-term measures. In that context, we value the comprehensive nature of the framework for action.

Among the areas that are a priority for Colombia, we would stress the need to increase international aid capacity to respond to immediate food needs. We cannot postpone reducing imbalances and distortions within the multilateral trade system. We need to increase cooperation in adapting the agricultural sector to climate change, and to revitalize and increase agricultural and livestock productivity in developing countries in order to respond more effectively to the increase in global food demand.

Another priority is to address the situation created by the dynamic of energy supply and demand, especially given the striking increase in the price of oil, which in the past eight years has exceeded 500 per cent. That increase is echoed, for example, in the price of fertilizers, where the increase has approached 700 per cent. In Colombia, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has determined that, in the structure of production costs in the agricultural and livestock industries, the prices of oil and fertilizers fluctuate between 30 to 40 per cent, including the cost of transport. It is thus very unlikely that the shock of 500 and 700 per cent increases in oil and fertilizer prices have not had a significant impact on the recent rise in food prices.

In that critical context, renewable energies, and specifically biofuels, appear to be viable alternatives in the context of sustainable development. Those alternatives would enable us to help to transform the energy economy, to improve national and international energy security, to reduce the costs of producing and transporting agricultural products, to invigorate the rural sector and to strengthen environmental protection, given the emissions reductions that can be achieved by implementing policies aimed at the extensive use of biofuels.

Therefore, it would be paradoxical to single out biofuels, on the basis of generalizations, as a decisive factor in the global food situation; we must take into account the specificities and particular conditions in producer countries. In addition, we must bear in mind that, despite the sector's growth in developing and developed countries, the global production of biofuels — ethanol and biodiesel — takes up less than 0.07 per cent of global food production.

In Colombia, the production of biofuels from sugar cane and oil palm has not involved using fertile lands once used for food production or reducing the national supply of agricultural foodstuffs. To the contrary, it has contributed to the creation of thousands of jobs, stimulating greater investment in rural areas and the productivity of underused land. In my country, which has a great abundance of cultivable land, biofuels represent a new opportunity to expand the agricultural frontier without affecting a single millimetre of forest. In turn, expanding the agricultural frontier means greater opportunities for food production and greater benefits for the poorest rural populations. For example, if we in Colombia used 50 per cent of suitable available land to plant sugar cane for ethanol and palm for biodiesel, we could create 800,000 new rural jobs.

I should like to reaffirm that biofuels production does not occur in a vacuum; it occurs in a context of significant challenges related to sustainable development and, above all, enormous difficulties regarding energy security at all levels. In that connection, we note that, while the Task Force's comprehensive framework for action recognizes the grave situation of oil prices in its contextual analysis, it does not include broad political guidelines on energy issues; its guidance is limited to the biofuels issue. We would like to see more ambitious actions planned regarding the energy crisis in general. For example, these could include measures to promote in-depth studies on the effects of high energy prices on food security, as well as recommendations including policy options to mitigate those effects at the national and international levels. Undoubtedly, many of the organizations represented in the High-Level Task Force could contribute to that end within their respective mandates.

Finally, I should like to express once again our appreciation for the Secretary-General's presentation and for his leadership in formulating the responses of the United Nations system to the food crisis. We hope that we will have further opportunities to express our points of view on those efforts and to make specific observations once a detailed assessment of the guidance contained in the framework for action has been carried out.

Ms. Rodríguez de Ortiz (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela thanks the President of the General Assembly for holding this timely and important meeting. It gives us an opportunity to stress issues of principle and to make a number of observations in this Hall that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has already expressed at the Special Meeting of the Economic and Social Council on the Global Food Crisis and at the High-Level Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) on World Food Security, entitled "The Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy", held in June in Rome. We also express our appreciation for the introduction of the comprehensive framework for action formulated by the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis, established by Secretary-

General Ban Ki-moon on 28 April. In that connection, this delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The causes of the food crisis include the great effect of geopolitical factors on the food and energy markets and the vulnerability of those markets to speculative activity by public and private actors. Our delegation would like to stress that in 1996, when the right to food was reaffirmed at the World Food Summit, 800 million human beings suffered from hunger. By 2000, that figure had increased to 864 million, according to FAO statistics. Can we continue to describe this situation as a temporary crisis? Or is it the failure of neo-liberal economic models that are being imposed on us in accordance with the interests and strategies of the developed countries?

We take this opportunity to reiterate what the high authorities of Venezuela said during the Summit of Heads of State and Government on Food Security, held in Managua in May 2008, and at the Fifth PetroCaribe Summit, held on 12 July 2008 in Maracaibo. They identified the crisis of the capitalist model as the structural cause of both the food crisis and the global energy problems.

While the FAO High-Level Conference on World Food Security gave a sense of urgency to the issue of food security and put forward a strategy for the short, medium and long terms, we believe that it ignored important considerations related to the root causes of the crisis. Our delegation defends the right to food as one of the fundamental components of human rights, including the right to development. We reaffirm the right of all people to have access to healthful and nutritious food, together with the right to suitable food and the inalienable right of all people not to suffer from hunger.

In that connection, some try to put most of the blame on fossil fuels for the staggering rise in food prices and agricultural products. However, studies recognized by the FAO and other bodies have characterized as limited at best the effects of the rise in fossil fuel prices on the increase in food prices.

Secondly, there is the supposed alternative of biofuels, which affect food production because they compete for the lands and freshwater that would otherwise be used to guarantee the right to food. In 2008, biofuels production will consume approximately 35 million tons of oilseeds; 250 million tons of sugar cane, or approximately 20 per cent of world production; and more than 92 million tons of corn. That last figure represents approximately 30 per cent of the maize production of the United States and would supply 60 times the consumption of maize in a country such as Venezuela or six times that of Mexico, the world's largest consumer.

Similarly, the change from smallholder agricultural production for local consumption to large agribusiness has also affected the situation. Single crop production is mainly for export, while the monopolistic and oligopolistic practices of multinational food companies based on free trade agreements are obstructing the development of the peoples of the South.

The increase in prices in world energy products is more than just an issue of supply and demand. The geopolitical factor comes into play, especially with the wars of occupation undertaken by the United States in such a sensitive region for those markets as the Middle East.

There is also the crisis in the international financial and monetary markets, especially the weakening of the United States dollar; excessive speculation; the lack of regulation of the futures markets; the strangling of refining capacity; the drop in the level of certified oil reserves; problems in production in some countries and regions, such as the Niger Delta; the steady increase in demand both in the developed world and in many developing countries; and natural disasters, among other factors.

At the multilateral level, Venezuela has always promoted differentiated standards and disciplines that favour the developing world, especially in the World Trade Organization (WTO). The agreements prevailing at the WTO do not guarantee sufficient space for policies to enable countries of the South to implement active development policies, including an industrial policy that would allow them, for example, to change their production patterns and make progress towards goals such as diversification of production.

At the regional level, Venezuela has proposed the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) as a way to break the cycle of profit and wealth for the few and poverty for the many. Venezuelan and Cuban technicians are carrying out major projects for

increased agricultural production in Haiti. Venezuelan urea is being traded at fair prices, which has meant significant savings for many smallholders in our sister countries.

Within the framework of ALBA, an agreement was recently signed on the development of cooperation programmes on sovereignty and food security, with the approval of a food security fund of $100 million to finance agricultural production projects put forward by ALBA countries and the establishment of a food trade network within ALBA.

The setting up of PetroCaribe has effectively and efficiently contributed to the development of sister countries in the Caribbean and Central America. About 200,000 barrels of crude and its derivatives are being delivered daily to member countries, most of which have limited energy resources, through the financing of their oil bill, which has allowed them to save $921 million, and with the establishment of eight joint ventures, which are developing joint investment projects, representing $552 million, for the development of refining, storage and oil delivery infrastructure.

Under the Bolivarian initiative, heads of State or Government, meeting at the fifth PetroCaribe summit, the declaration of which is being distributed as an annex to our written statement, agreed to establish a fund with 50 cents for each barrel of oil exported outside the cooperation agreements with Venezuela, in order to finance agricultural initiatives. We have also called upon the regulatory authorities of the futures markets and the New York and London stock exchanges to take the necessary measures to eliminate the speculation on international oil prices.

Recently, at the food security summit in Managua in May 2008 and the PetroCaribe summit on 12 July 2008, we adopted the coordination initiative for agricultural policies known as PetroAlimentos, which seeks to complement energy and food activities by establishing a fund that will finance activities such as the purchase of seeds for food production and agricultural inputs.

Finally, in order to seek alternatives to meet the challenges of the increase in the prices of food and food inputs, my country will be hosting a special regional conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization in the second half of 2008 to discuss, among other issues, the increase in food prices in the region and its impact on the people in our region so as to find a way effectively to eradicate poverty.

Mr. Ali (Malaysia): First, I would like to commend General Assembly President Kerim for his initiative and the Secretary-General for his briefing on the comprehensive framework for action.

What is required for us effectively to address the convergent food and fuel crises are conceptual clarity, evidence and the will to take action.

In terms of conceptual clarity, it is important to be mindful that the two crises are the offshoot of the unattained promises of sustainable development. Sustainable development must therefore continue to be the overarching framework for addressing both. Failure to observe this fundamental truth would result in, among other things, not addressing the issues in a balanced and comprehensive manner, duplicating efforts and not focusing on the most vulnerable groups, who bear the biggest share of suffering.

On the issue of evidence, conventional wisdom suggests that both the food and fuel crises are caused by the following common factors: increasing demand and supply constraints. In that context, in the case of the food crisis, it is caused by diminishing food stocks and the reduction in agricultural production and productivity, especially in the developing world. In the case of the fuel crisis, it is caused, at least in the short term, by insufficient production by the major exporters. The third common factor is speculation.

While we have had much discussion on the first two, the third has suffered from benign neglect. However, a recent paper by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on that issue mentioned the following points. First, the flow of speculative capital into the commodity sector is a factor in the price increases. Secondly, it is likely that those increases are linked to global financial turmoil due to the sub-prime crisis, resulting in speculators looking for assets with rising prices reorienting their activities towards commodities. Thirdly, as of March 2008, $170 billion has been invested in the commodity sector. Fourthly, the first quarter of this year witnessed a 32-per-cent increase in the volume of globally traded grains and futures compared to the same period last year.

On that topic, the paper concludes that, while precise information and analysis are lacking on the

impact of speculative activity on food prices, the high prices of some key staples are due largely to speculation. Therefore, more evidence needs to be gathered in that regard. In addition to speculation, there is still a lack of clarity as to the precise nature, dynamics and extent of the links between the two crises.

With regard to the issue of our will to take action, comprehensively addressing these challenges requires considerable courage. Democratically elected Governments will have to make tough decisions, balancing not only competing interests in the future, but also the welfare of future generations.

For its part, the Malaysian Government has increased the price of petroleum by 40 per cent. While that has given rise to public complaints, the situation had been untenable, and if such an action had not been taken, for the first time in our history the Government's operating expenditures — of which fuel subsidies constituted a significant proportion — would have been higher than its development expenditures. In the end, a responsible Government is not necessarily a popular Government.

If we are to address this problem, all of us must make such tough decisions. It will not be easy. If a country like Malaysia, which is a net exporter of petroleum, has had to bite the bullet, the situation for importers must be infinitely worse. It is for that reason that we must view this as a shared enterprise for the sake of our common humanity, now and in the future. As first steps, we should address the following issues.

First, we must create a consensus on appropriate methods of producing or creating alternative sources of energy. Secondly, the major oil producers have an important role to play in addressing the interrelated problems of oil supply and prices by increasing their production of crude. Increases in production are, of course, mere short-term measures. Long-term solutions must be found to stabilize oil prices. For example, the international community could examine how the futures market might be organized to assist in stabilizing prices. Thirdly, we must share ideas on how to mitigate the negative effects of short-term actions to address these crises on the long-term requirements of sustained growth and development.

Like all other delegations, we have yet to fully analyse the comprehensive framework for action. However, our preliminary remarks are as follows. First, we note that the framework is not a funding instrument and that the figure of $25 billion to $40 billion, given as the annual global incremental financing requirement to maintain current progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goal 1, is an indicative one. However, if the framework is to be truly comprehensive, some way other than merely stating requirements needs to be found to marry its operational aspects with funding. Secondly, we look forward to constant interaction with the High-Level Task Force on the implementation and evolution of the comprehensive framework for action. Thirdly and finally, an evaluation framework must be built into the framework's implementation and evolution process.

Mr. McMahan (United States of America): Let me join others in thanking General Assembly President Kerim for convening this meeting. We appreciate very much Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's briefing this morning and his initiative to establish the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. We believe that the work of the Task Force and its comprehensive framework of action can help to ensure a timely and comprehensive United Nations response that takes advantage of the strengths of each United Nations agency and avoids duplication.

The United States is working closely with the international community and the United Nations system to address rising food prices and insecurity, and remains a leader in food-related assistance. The international community took an important first step towards addressing that problem at the High-Level Conference on World Food Security, held in Rome in June. We agreed that the international community — affected countries, donors and international organizations — must meet urgent humanitarian needs, support expanded food production, continue efforts towards trade liberalization and promote investments in science and technology to ensure food security in the long term. Our joint Declaration serves as an excellent basis on which to develop our response.

The High-Level Conference reflected the clear international consensus that many factors are contributing to increased food prices, including large increases in fuel and transportation costs; poor harvests in exporting countries due to adverse weather; the export restrictions of some countries; and the unprecedented, yet very welcome, economic growth and associated increase in demand for food products worldwide, especially in developing economies. The

increased focus on the development of biofuels as an alternative to oil-based fuels has also contributed to the increase in demand for agricultural products.

Given the complexity of the problem, we believe that overcoming the global food crisis will require a multi-tiered approach relying both on immediate emergency assistance and on long-term actions. In response to President Bush's May 2008 request to Congress for $770 million in additional food-related assistance, the United States is pursuing an integrated three-pronged strategy for assisting countries most in need. Under our strategy, we will provide immediate humanitarian assistance to those made vulnerable by rising food prices; support agricultural productivity and development, focusing on countries capable of rapidly increasing staple-food production; and promote trade liberalization and increased access to advanced agricultural technologies, including biotechnology. With our other food security assistance programmes already in place, the United States will spend nearly $5 billion in 2008 and 2009 to fight global hunger.

The United States is also committed to working with others to make progress on those aspects of the food situation that require a collective response. We encourage our fellow members of the World Trade Organization to conclude an ambitious agreement in the Doha Round this year that increases market access for agricultural products and reduces trade-distorting subsidies. We also encourage them to lift restrictions on agricultural exports, expand research, promote science-based regulation and encourage the adoption of innovative technology, including biotechnology.

We also see excellent opportunities for collaboration between the United Nations system and the Group of Eight (G8). Leaders of the G8 issued a strong statement on food security at their recent summit. They set a number of ambitious goals, including supporting the goal of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme of 6.2 per cent annual growth in agricultural productivity and doubling the production of key food staples in African countries meeting the Programme's criteria. A G8 experts group will monitor the implementation of those commitments, support the work of the High-Level Task Force and work with others to create a global partnership to address food security issues.

Many speakers have noted the close connection between rising food and energy prices. Clearly, food and energy security are now more closely linked and more important than ever before. Oil prices have risen sharply with increasing world demand for oil. As the G8 leaders stated, there is a need for all countries to reaffirm our shared interests in and responsibilities for promoting energy security. We need to make concerted efforts to address the underlying supply-and-demand causes of the rise in oil prices, increase transparency in oil markets, improve energy efficiency and promote diversification.

Biofuels have grown in importance as countries have struggled with the twin issues of food and energy security. In order to ensure the compatibility of sustainable biofuels policies with food security, the United States will accelerate the development and commercialization of sustainable second-generation biofuels from non-food plant materials and inedible biomass. We will also work together with other stakeholders to develop science-based benchmarks and indicators for biofuels production and use.

Mr. Khaleel (Maldives): Allow me at the outset to express my delegation's gratitude to General Assembly President Kerim for convening this important meeting of the General Assembly on the global food and energy crisis.

Allow me also to echo the sentiments of gratitude and appreciation expressed to the Secretary-General for his leadership in taking timely measures to address the crisis by the United Nations system in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.

The formation of the United Nations High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis and the constructive work that the Task Force is undertaking deserve recognition. The comprehensive framework for action drawn up by the Task Force contains the elements necessary for dealing with the serious crisis. It is, in our view, an important step in the right direction.

The international response to the global food and energy crisis has been remarkable. The outcome of the Rome summit and the actions taken by the major financial institutions and the leaders of the Group of Eight early this month give us much hope and encouragement. The special debate held by the Economic and Social Council earlier this year and this meeting of the General Assembly demonstrate the urgency and importance that the international community attaches to that crucial issue. We believe

that working together in partnership and generating the necessary resources to implement the comprehensive framework for action's recommendations will determine the success of our efforts.

As a small island developing country, the Maldives is extremely concerned about the global food and energy crisis. Although the food insecurity situation in the country at present is relatively stable, the potential of a severe blow to our economy from rising food and energy prices is real and alarmingly high. My Government is fully aware of the risks involved and is taking all necessary precautionary measures to ensure that the crisis does not adversely affect the daily lives and well-being of our people.

Due to the lack of land available for cultivation, poor soil conditions and the shortage of fresh water for irrigation, agricultural development is relatively limited in the Maldives. Except for coconut and fresh tuna fish, 90 per cent of our food items are imported from overseas. Presently, 98 per cent of our energy needs are met by importing fossil fuels. Heavy dependency on imports, limited storage facilities and ad hoc distribution pose severe food security risks. Developing the agricultural sector as the third pillar of our economy is one of the priorities of our seventh national development plan, which is being implemented at present. We are now working with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, as well as the private sector, to develop the agriculture industry by introducing new and innovative techniques and technology that will make it a vehicle for commercially viable sustainable rural development.

Despite its numerous vulnerabilities and development constraints, the Maldives is among those countries that are presently on track to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on time. While we have already achieved most of the goals, including MDG 1 on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, the ongoing food and energy crisis and the devastating effects of climate change pose severe challenges to the strides we have made in our development. Our struggle to achieve the nutrition targets could suffer serious negative effects as a result of the crisis.

My delegation believes that climate change should always be central to all discussions on food security. While short-term measures, such as urgent food aid and assistance to the most vulnerable, may ease the immediate pressure, a sustainable solution to the problem lies in a fair and equitable trading regime and a collective commitment to combat climate change and environmental degradation. The importance of the early completion of the Doha Round and the successful conclusion of the post-Bali negotiations in that regard cannot be overemphasized.

Before I conclude, allow me to flag an issue that should be of equal importance to us all — the steady depletion of global water resources. The causes of water scarcity are essentially similar to those of the present food crisis and are interrelated. Even at present, many countries are facing severe water shortages. Unless we take urgent and timely action, the depletion of water resources could have a much worse and more debilitating impact on mankind than that we have already seen.

Mr. Sallam (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the President for convening this important meeting on the global food and energy crisis. We thank him for his endeavours and we also thank the Secretary-General for his efforts to find a way out of the crisis. My country's delegation endorses the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

This meeting is taking place at just the right time, when there has been a surge in oil and food prices and when the problem of climate change is beginning to have adverse effects on the world economy and the economies of developing and small countries in particular. Saudi Arabia is working to stabilize the world energy market and to strengthen the economic and social development of developing countries. We are also seeking to foster prosperity across the globe.

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, organized an energy conference in Jeddah on 26 June 2008, with the participation of the largest oil producers and consumers from around the world, in order to limit the surge in the price of oil. He confirmed that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will do everything in its power in the context of its oil policy to strengthen cooperation and dialogue between consumer and producer countries and to stabilize the oil market, while striking a balance between supply and demand and guaranteeing reliable oil supplies to the consumer.

He also indicated at the conference that Saudi Arabia, the largest oil producer, realizes that the world oil market has sufficient supplies and that there are increasing commercial reserves. He pledged to work with other OPEC countries to address the increase in the price of oil, which has been abnormally and unjustifiably high and could have adverse effects on the world economy.

At the Jeddah conference, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques also announced an energy initiative for the poorest countries, with a $1 billion earmark to help developing countries to address the problem, and called on the World Bank to convene a major conference of donor countries and international financial and economic institutions to discuss the initiative. He also confirmed that the oil policy of the Kingdom was based on a fair price for oil that would not harm the interests of either producer or consumer countries. He also confirmed that Saudi Arabia is as keen to protect the interests of other countries as it is to protect its own. He also announced an additional initiative in which $500 million would be provided to developing countries on preferential terms through the Saudi Fund for Development in order to fund development projects. Saudi Arabia has also announced that, in July, it will increase its oil production by 200,000 barrels a day to stabilize the world price of oil, which continues to rise.

The Kingdom has allocated $500 million to the World Food Programme in order to help address the global food crisis and to help the World Food Programme itself to attain its objective of raising $750 million for that purpose. The Kingdom has also adopted an emergency Arab plan for food security comprising 10 proposed measures and mechanisms, and has called for the conclusion of a balanced world trade agreement promoting the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 3 on food security and sustainable agricultural development throughout the world, in particular in developing countries. We have also stressed the need to continue to review and develop policies, legislation and programmes aimed at attracting investment to the agricultural sector in countries with real agricultural potential and resources, with the participation of the private sector.

Mr. Tašovski (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia): At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for convening this timely meeting on the global food and energy crisis, which poses a serious threat to a number of countries worldwide. I should also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his briefing on the crisis and for his presentation of the revised comprehensive framework for action of the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

My country has aligned itself with the statement delivered by the representative of France on behalf of the European Union.

The global food and energy crisis is one of the most important challenges of our time. It is a challenge that has an impact on all of us, poor or rich, developed or less developed, but that mostly affects vulnerable communities. Furthermore, with respect to global food security, feeding millions of hungry people should be one of the first concrete measures taken in a series of required measures by the international community to successfully tackle this very serious problem.

In that context, we welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General to create a special High-Level Task Force, coordinated by Mr. John Holmes, and its comprehensive framework for action, which contains a range of options and guidance on how to respond to the global food crisis in a coherent and coordinated way, tackling all aspects of humanitarian and development assistance with the aim of contributing to longer-term food security.

The response of United Nations agencies and the donor communities has been prompt and efficient. Just over a month ago, at the Rome Conference held under the auspices of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, all relevant stakeholders were brought together and adopted the Rome Declaration on World Food Security.

However, despite the success achieved to date, the joint planning and coordination to ensure sustainable food production needs to be continued, and food supplies must be provided unhindered. Furthermore, the focus should be on the causes of the crisis, which are years of neglect of the agricultural sector worldwide and a lack of investment to increase productivity. That should be improved immediately in order to make food available at reasonable prices through a more effective international trade system.

Among the underlying causes of the global food crisis is a lack of investment to increase food

productivity. In that respect, my Government has initiated a set of long-term measures, supported by financial investments of up to €420 million in the agricultural sector, aimed at meeting the long-term objective of increasing global food production by 50 per cent by the year 2030. At the same time, the world's population will reach 7.2 billion by 2015.

The Government of the Republic of Macedonia is expanding that set of measures in accordance with the recommendations arising out of the outcomes of the Rome and Group of Eight summits, taking into account the upcoming negotiations in Poznań and Copenhagen to reach a comprehensive agreement on global warming, one of the main root causes of the food and energy crisis.

Furthermore, in addition to the global food crisis, the international community is facing a swiftly increasing demand for energy. The gap between the rising demand and limited supply of energy resources is widening. Accordingly, the combined challenges of energy security, food security and climate change mitigation require joint action to increase renewable energy sources and, at the same time, create an energy-efficient system.

In that respect, my Government is doing its utmost to take full advantage of its own potential to fully meet our country's demand for electricity through renewable sources of energy. We are also promoting investment in the area of renewable energy through a common European Union support scheme. At the same time, however, we are aware that that visionary goal can be achieved only through coordinated action with the support of the international community. At this stage, our steps to meet the target of 20 per cent renewable energy by 2020 are symbolic but of enormous importance.

The food security and energy crisis is standing in the way of our efforts to eradicate extreme poverty and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. However, we must not be discouraged. We should think positively and view the crisis as an opportunity for many countries to revitalize global agricultural production and trade by implementing short-term and long-term measures and actions to promote agricultural development at the national, regional and international levels.

Finally, we must prevail in addressing the world food and energy crisis. If new initiatives are to succeed, a sustained financial and political commitment is required. We are convinced that such a commitment, together with the credibility and leading role of the United Nations, will save millions of lives currently being threatened by hunger.

Mr. Benítez Versón (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba welcomes the decision to convene this debate. The current food crisis is part of the grave structural crisis of the world economy. The hunger suffered by 862 million people throughout the world is no incidental phenomenon; its origin is rooted in the effects of neo-liberal globalization, which results in the wasteful consumption of a few industrialized countries at the expense of the poverty of the great majority of humanity.

In the face of the crisis, the commitment to halve the number of people suffering from malnutrition by 2015 is nothing more than a hollow phrase. The paradox of the crisis is that there is sufficient food today to feed every human being on the planet.

The countries of the North are responsible for the world food crisis. The Governments of the developed countries imposed trade liberalization and structural adjustment formulas on the countries of the South. They thereby ruined many small producers, turning them into net food importers. The countries of the North refuse to eliminate scandalous agricultural subsidies, while at the same time they impose their own rules on international trade. Their voracious transnational companies set prices, monopolize technology, impose unfair certifications and manipulate distribution channels, sources of financing and trade.

We must also need to cite as another cause of the crisis the failure to honour commitments made with respect to official development assistance, the minimal transfer of technology and the speculation generated by bellicose adventurism.

As if that were not bad enough, the irrational aspirations of the rich countries to perpetuate their consumption patterns have led them to the sinister strategy of turning food into fuel. The irresponsible trend among developed countries, especially the United States and Europe, of using grains and cereals to produce biofuels has aggravated the crisis.

Cuba reaffirms that, although drafting sustainability criteria for producing biofuels could be an issue for discussion, they would have to start by

excluding basic food crops, such as grains and cereals, from biofuel production sources. The contrary would be a very severe threat to food security.

Cuba regrets that the Declaration adopted at the High-Level Conference on World Food Security of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) did not include an objective analysis of the causes of world hunger. If we are to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, we cannot simply adopt palliative measures. We need to work for sustained world action. The vast majority of countries defended that position at the Special Meeting on the food security of the Economic and Social Council and at the special session of the Human Rights Council proposed by Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement member countries.

We believe that the comprehensive framework for action established by the High-Level Task Force, established by the Secretary-General, is an evolving document. For the moment, we are studying it. We feel that it should be thoroughly examined by Member States.

Cuba believes that, among the measures to be adopted to address the current crisis, it would be necessary to establish an international, equitable and democratic order without wars of occupation and to devote at least a part of the millions of dollars of military expenditure to development. We must rebuild and develop agricultural production in the countries of the South. The developed countries have the resources to do so — they now need the political will. It is necessary to forgive the external debt of developing countries, which they have already paid more than once. The countries of the South would thereby have an additional $345 billion per year at their disposal. The developed countries must honour their commitment to devote at least 0.7 per cent of their gross national income to official development assistance. In that way, the countries of the South would, at the minimum, have an additional $130 billion every year available to them. We must devote just one quarter of the money that every year is wasted on commercial publicity to food production, which would provide almost an additional $250 billion to fight hunger and malnutrition. We should devote the money that is used for agricultural subsidies in the North to agricultural development in the South; our countries would thereby have approximately $1 billion to invest in food production every day. We must honour the commitments of the Kyoto Protocol without seeking to establish new conditionalities, and establish more ambitious emissions cuts under the programme adopted in Bali.

The current round of trade negotiations must be turned into a genuine and productive development round. The multilateral trading system should avert any damage to food security. The large transnational corporations in agro-business and the energy sector must be disciplined. A tax on their profits should be established as a contribution to an international fund, under the aegis of the United Nations, to support agricultural change in developing countries. The United Nations Development Programme must be able to address genuine development problems, facilitate modern agricultural technology transfer and assist in creating necessary capacity for urgent transformation needed in agriculture. That would complement the assistance of other agencies and programmes, such as FAO, the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

I would like to conclude by reaffirming Cuba's support for the convening of a special session of the General Assembly during its sixty-third session in order to consider in depth the issues related to food security and energy security. If that session were appropriately organized, it would allow us to achieve the concrete results that we all expect and need.

Mr. Mansour (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I should like at the outset to thank the President for taking the initiative to convene this meeting as a special moment for the United Nations and its development agenda. I would also like to congratulate the Secretary-General for his tireless mobilization efforts and for the extremely enlightening presentation of the comprehensive framework for action advocated by the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis.

Before raising some specific points to which my delegation attaches special interest, I would like to associate my country with the statements made respectively by the representatives of Antigua and Barbuda and Ethiopia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the African Group.

Halfway through the agreed timeline for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, and in the context of food, financial and energy crises and climate threats, the impact of which is undermining

and even jeopardizing the achievement and perspectives for development, humankind is facing an unprecedented challenge. Hence, the urgency of coordinated international action in the short-, medium- and long-terms to address forthwith, upstream and downstream, the food crisis and its manifestations and underlying causes.

The International Conference in Rome made it possible to restore the food problem to the heart of the international community's agenda and to highlight the links between food, energy and climate change. The Declaration adopted on that occasion reflects the commitment of all parties to rise to immediate and longer-term challenges related to the food crisis, as well as to uphold the values of cooperation and solidarity.

In its action plan, the High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis proposed a unified and integrated response involving all stakeholders at all levels. Questions remain, however, regarding how to raise funding and mobilize resources for the developing countries, especially the poorest among them, which are already facing major funding difficulties.

The Secretary-General said this morning that the world food crisis is not just a short-term problem and that the price of inaction will be tragic for present and future generations. His proposals — especially for agricultural investment, upgrading rural economies, liberation of the agricultural market and increased assistance for small farmers — are just some of the avenues for action that my delegation considers to be of importance.

In highly rural regions, investment in the agricultural economy is a strategic choice, given its multiplying effect on production, the income of farmers, the level of food security, economic growth and human development. However, a strategy geared towards the rural and the agricultural economy requires substantial financial resources and predictable commercial outlets, which are lacking at present.

Other options could be examined, such as the possibility of granting preferential tariffs for the transportation of foodstuffs or the granting of urgent assistance in the form of agricultural inputs to countries suffering from a food shortage so as to allow them to develop their own production potential and to reconstitute their food stocks. Thus, it is recommended that financial assistance be provided to net food-importing countries to alleviate the budget deficit generated by the surge in prices, as well as to reduce the taxes and customs payments on imported foodstuffs.

I should like to take this opportunity to congratulate the President of the General Assembly and the many delegations that have highlighted the principles of solidarity and cooperation as fundamental values in international relations and in settling world crises, such as the food and energy crisis. As a result, many proposed actions and new guidelines for financing based on solidarity and cooperation have been presented in a number of forums.

In my delegation's opinion and in the light of the urgency of the situation, it is very appropriate to make immediate use of the existing financing mechanisms. In that context and among such initiatives, I should like to mention the appeal launched on 28 April 2008 by the President of Tunisia, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, urging countries to contribute to the world solidarity endeavour and to fight together against hunger, poverty and insecurity in the world by levying a dollar per barrel of oil for allocation to the World Solidarity Fund created by the United Nations in 2002 pursuant to a General Assembly resolution. That mechanism, operational since 2002, was given a legal and institutional framework decided upon by all the stakeholders.

The World Solidarity Fund, established as a trust fund of the United Nations Development Programme, is intended to contribute to the promotion of human development and to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the reduction of poverty, through interventions to improve the living conditions of the most needy populations and to support income-generating activities, especially in rural areas and in the sphere of small crafts and trade, through microfinancing and microbusiness.

Mr. Bui The Giang (Viet Nam): I wish to thank General Assembly President Kerim for convening this important meeting on the food and energy crisis.

Let me also join other speakers in commending the practical steps that the United Nations has taken to address the food crisis issue, particularly the Secretary-General's initiative to establish the United Nations inter-agency High-Level Task Force to promote a unified response to the global food challenge. I

especially appreciate the comprehensive framework for action that the Task Force has just issued, for it has succeeded to a certain extent in its aim of providing a range of options from which choices can be made by Governments and institutions, as well as guidance and impetus to the many actors to address immediate needs, build resilience and contribute to long-term food security, as clearly stated by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in the cover letter of the document.

We shall thoroughly study the document in order to select and apply whatever is best suited to the specific conditions of Viet Nam. We also wish to see the document expand further to cover in greater length continuously soaring oil prices and the energy supply deficit — one of the main and direct causes of the food crisis.

Although a rice-exporting country, Viet Nam has not been an exception in the food crisis. The escalation in the price of oil has sharply triggered food-processing costs and the costs of fertilizers, shipping and storage, resulting in soaring food prices. Within two months of April and May this year, Vietnamese consumers experienced a twofold increase in the price of rice. At the macro level, the price escalation has been followed by a two-digit inflation rate, which poses a formidable challenge for the Vietnamese economy this year.

Faced with this situation, the Vietnamese Government has undertaken a series of emergency measures to ensure a sufficient supply of rice in the market, while accelerating the elaboration of a long-term plan on food security, for which, we believe, the Task Force's comprehensive framework for action will serve as an essential input.

As the world's second largest rice exporter, Viet Nam is fully aware of its responsibility at this difficult time. Over the past several months, we have signed rice-exporting contracts with a number of Asian and African partners. In anticipation of the country's estimated rice export volume of 4.5 million metric tons this year, or even more if our farmers can enjoy another bumper harvest this winter, my Government continues to put in place more intensive measures to help increase agricultural production, including, inter alia, promoting agro-based research and development, improving rice varieties, providing farmers with fertilizers and technical assistance, and upgrading irrigation networks and storage and transport facilities. Hopefully, those measures will allow us to ensure our long-term domestic food security and, at the same time, contribute to a stable global food supply.

As I mentioned a moment ago, there is a close association between the current food crisis and the high price of energy, calling for a solution that deals with both crises simultaneously. Therefore, while recognizing the efforts of many countries and organizations to carry out in-depth research for new sources of energy and to maintain oil-production levels, we propose that the United Nations develop a comprehensive study on the energy crisis and, on that basis, produce a set of policy recommendations at the national, regional and global levels, as the comprehensive framework for action has done in relation to the food crisis. If such a document can be prepared, the United Nations can again prove its indispensable value as a centre of collective wisdom to the world community in general, and developing countries in particular.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.